

REMARKS

Claims 1-12 were pending in this application. Claim 1 has been amended. No new matter has been added.

ARGUMENTS

Claim rejection -35USC §102

The feature of Claim 1, step c): "...said separating occurring by lateral introducing a first and a second separator (38, 40, 46, 50) into said stack being formed (58) from opposite sides with respect to the stack same for separating the stack located underneath", is not anticipated by Schmidt in as stated by the Examiner. In Schmidt there is an introduction of count fingers 38, 40 that block temporarily the growing stack and allow the introduction of separator fingers 46, 50. See column 8, lines 12-19. Count fingers 38, 40 are then retracted, see column 8, lines 20-26, and the separation is carried out by distancing separation fingers 46, 50. The separation is not completed until the separation fingers 46, 50 are distanced from each other.

Claim 1, step c1) states: "said stack having a width and said two separators being introduced in said stack for about half said width bearing together said stack being formed" This feature is not anticipated by Schmidt. This is not true for count fingers 38, 40, and is not true for separator fingers 46, 50. Since count fingers 38, 40 have not to bear the stack being formed 58, they are not introduced for a half of the width, but much less than a half. See Fig. 3, about a quarter of the width. In fact, they have only to create laterally a small gap in order to let separation fingers 46, 50 enter the stack. Perhaps, separator fingers 46, 50 could be introduced (for the full width from both sides) without count fingers 38, 40, but count fingers 38, 40 are used to assist the introduction of separator fingers 46, 50.

Claim 1, step c2) states: "said two separators leaving at least one wing of sheet hanging free between said two separators, said wing hanging at about half of said width" This feature is not anticipated by Schmidt. This is not true for count fingers 38, 40, because they do not cause a separation, and the stack remains interfolded until separator fingers 46, 50 are introduced and distanced the two stacks 58 and 30 are not interfolded any more, but the wing 70 hangs laterally

(see Fig. 5).

Claim 1, step e) states: “moving a sheet stretching board suitable for provisionally supporting the stack and stretching said or each wing, with a portion of wing of sheet exceeding said sheet stretching board”, This feature is not anticipated by fold over finger 48, which does not provisionally support the stack 58, which is supported by separator finger 50

Claim 1, step f) states: “withdrawing said first and second separator up to reaching a position external to said stack being formed”. This feature is not anticipated by separator fingers 46, 50, and in particular by separator finger 50, and fold over finger 48 does not receive the stack either.

In view of the above, it is respectfully submitted that Claim 1 as presently amended is not anticipated by Schmidt. Schmidt requires at least five movable fingers 38, 40, 46, 50, 48 to carry out a separation step that is less complete of that obtainable with the invention by three elements 10, 20, 15. In fact, in Schmidt there are two options, that is with the wing starting from left up to the middle of the width, or a double fold starting from the left up to $\frac{1}{4}$ of the width and back, by using sheet stretching board 48.

In the present invention, there are a multiplicity of options. Moreover, in Schmidt count fingers 38 and 40 are supported integrally to separation fingers 46 and 50. Therefore, they cannot move back until table 10, 36 is back. In fact, finger 46 do not support the stack. Even in case finger 46 supported the stack, fingers 46 and 50, along with count fingers 38 and 40, could not move back upwards, because finger 46 is arranged on a same supporting means. Therefore, several structural modifications should be necessary in Schmidt to arrive at the invention.

The same arguments are valid for apparatus as claimed in Claim 6.

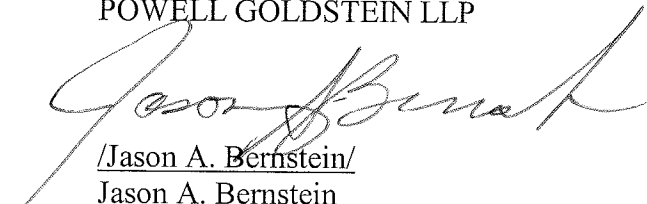
Claim rejection -35USC §103

The present invention is nonobvious over Schmidt in view of De Matteis (U.S. Patent No. 6,228,014. Applicant respectfully submits that in fact, folding fingers 40a and 40b of Figs. 6 and 7 have been considered as separation fingers. Actually, folding arms 40a and 40b do not support any stack, and move alternately to fold the panels of the stack. In De Matteis there is no description at all of any separation finger or sheet stretching board.

CONCLUSION

Applicant submits that the patent application is in condition for allowance and respectfully requests such actions. If the Examiner has any questions that can be answered by telephone, please contact the undersigned attorney of record at the telephone number listed below.

Respectfully submitted,
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